

*Is there anything like trip insurance we could buy somehow? It seems possible either Kenya or the US could forbid travel and that would leave us in a pickle.

Joseph: Bruce, I'm sure there are many travel insurance available in USA. Option I believe is available for the clients to choose from.

Bruce: As Joseph notes, airlines/travel companies offer insurance for that kind of unforeseen predicament, especially for flights. We, of course, would refund any payments should Kenya/U.S. government prohibit travel for whatever reason.

* What shots are needed, if any, and what shots are recommended?

Yellow-fever is recommended, but not mandatory. Malaria prophylaxis is also necessary, so be sure to make a visit to your doctor to make arrangements for appropriate malaria prescription.

* We tend to get sick when we go south of Texas; obviously Africa is a different continent and Kenya is at the equator – what can we do to not end up spending a few days of the trip looking for the facilities every 5 minutes?

You will need to use bottled water for drinking and brushing. Food in hotels are safe. Perhaps pack some basic medicines for diarrhea and insect bite repellent. They will just be fine.

Related to the above, prophylactic oral vaccine can be obtained from your doctor for prevention of typhoid. I have not taken this, but others on our trips have, just to be safe. Generally, it comes in pill form and last dose needs to be taken 1 week before travel (but consult with doctor to be certain).

*Clearly your friends speak lovely English, but I am sure many people speak other languages as their primary or only tongue. Embarrassingly, we do not speak a word of Bantu much less Maasai. To what extent is English spoken by just regular folks, and are there any words we really ought to learn (please, thank you, help, etc.)

“British English” is commonly spoken in Kenya. Issues of communication breakdown with staff of lodges does not arise. As we travel along we will be teaching some basic Swahili words like Asante sana (Thank you very much), Karibu (Welcome), Habari yako (How are you doing?), Chungana (Take care), Ndiyo (Yes), Hapana (No), Tafadhali (Please).

Yes, I have never experienced any problems with a language barrier. Everyone is extremely polite at the parks and hotels. Should any “communication misunderstandings” arise, there are several of us to help you out.

*Will we need to bring money for donations and tips and such? If so how much? What is normal, and importantly - what is the expectation of the people we will meet?

Wilson (our expert tour guide) and I are members of Lake Baringo Biodiversity Conservation Group, a community-based organisation that runs conservation programs at Lake Baringo. We collect donation from our clients for this group.

Tipping is a big culture in Kenya. Porters and waiters in lodges can be given \$2 to \$3 USD (200 to 300 Kenya Shillings). They prefer Kenya shillings. Drivers can be tipped \$20-30 USD per day. Guides and tour leaders can be given \$40-50 USD per day.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Tips are not mandatory, it's optional. If anyone gives poor services, too bad for them.

As Joseph noted above, tips and donations are often an important source of income for those working at the resorts, hotels and restaurants. I have also left a tip for room service personnel at the end of my stay--generally \$5 USD (500 KSh) for each day spent at a particular lodge. I generally budget \$10-15 per day for tips during my visits to Kenya. The people are incredibly grateful! I also pay an extra gratuity to the driver and guide at the end of the trip, rather than every day. However, the tip is generally divided by the number of guests per vehicle (so, with 4 guests per van, for example, that would be about \$7 USD per day (or about \$105 per person at end of safari). Same goes for the guide (approximately \$14 USD per day; or, about \$210 per person at end of trip). So, all told, I generally bring \$550 USD for all gratuity. Anything you wish to give to the Lake Baringo Conservation Group is up to you. Also, we plan to have a tree planting with a local school group; so, any contribution to the school (or donations of soccer balls) are greatly appreciated!

Additionally, beverages, other than morning coffee are not included in your package. Generally, this comes out to around \$300 during your stay in Kenya.

Lastly, you may wish to have some laundry done a few times during your 16-day trip. There is a fee per item of clothing laundered. Generally, I budget about \$30 for every time I have my clothes done at a resort; so, perhaps \$60 for laundry services twice during the trip (though cost could be more or less depending on amount of clothing you have cleaned).

Also, you may wish to pick up a few locally-made goods to take home.

Therefore, I always plan on bringing an extra \$1,000-\$1,500 USD.

It is important to note, however, that the current exchange rate is very favorable; so, your dollar may be stretched fairly significantly when it comes to hotel gratuities and purchase of souvenirs. Currently, \$1 USD = ~148 KSh; so, \$1,000 would convert to \$148,000 KSh (though this rate fluctuates). Funds can be converted in Kenya, but the exchange rate would be a bit less using currency vendors there.

Lastly, as Joseph noted, if you are not completely satisfied with service in any way, there is no obligation for offering gratuities.

* Will there be electric power in our room/tent at all our stops for the night, and if there is then what type of power (110 or 220, 50 or 60 hz) and what sort of plug format?

All rooms have power supply--220hz. Three-horned plug system is what we have here.

If you have trouble finding converters for your equipment, these items can be purchased in Kenya. We will have some extra converters as well, just in case. I often recommend packing a small (4 outlet) power strip and then just attach the converter to the power strip plug.

Another point to make is wi-fi is usually available at most resorts, though often weak in remote areas. We will carry a portable wi-fi device that we offer to clients for use.

*What am I not thinking to ask about, but you wished you knew before your first trip?

Perhaps the IMPORTANT TRAVEL INFORMATION DOCUMENT I SEND YOU WILL BE HELPFUL HERE.

Visa is required to enter Kenya and it must be done online. The cost is \$51 USD. Apply for your visa here: <https://accounts.ecitizen.go.ke/login>

You will need to make a colored copy of your visa and have it available for entrance into Kenya.

Should you decide to join us in 2024, we will gather flight info and other details, in order to make your arrival and stay in Kenya go as smoothly as possible. Just a brief note, I will be waiting for you in the airport as you complete your baggage claim and entry process. Just look for the tallish white guy with some type of Michigan attire!

*I understand this will not be taxing physically, and that getting out of the safari vehicle could leave one feeding the lions or the black mambas in an extremely personal way - if you know what I mean. So fair warning. Still, we like to get some exercise hiking and the like, will that be possible, or should we just sit back and enjoy the ride and exercise when we get home?

Walking is not permitted while we are inside a national park. But once we are in our lodges and camp, walking within the lodge compound will be allowed. We can organise for a walking safari with local Masai people in Masai Mara and Lake Baringo. But for better results, I suggest that you enjoy the trip and exercise when you guys get back home.

I am generally in agreement with Joseph; but, also keep in mind that any guided ground tours by locals are done at a price (prices vary). And, yes, lodges have ample space for walking and perhaps doing some independent wildlife/bird watching while on the grounds. We will also explore Lake Baringo's birdlife more up-close, so to speak, which will include a couple of "flat land" hikes in the surrounding scrub habitat.

Please be aware that everywhere in Kenya, there are thorny plants! Soft-bottomed shoes (like tennis shoes) should not be worn during field hikes. Be sure you have sturdy-bottomed, but comfortable, hiking shoes.

Least important questions - things I think I know the answer to:

*What lens(es) does your experience tell you to bring?

Camera of your choice.

I just bring my Canon w/Tamron lens (150-600 mm). You may want to bring a wide-angle lens for some landscape photos. I generally just use my iPhone for that purpose, as well as close ups and videos of wildlife.

*What do we need vis a vis sunscreen, bug juice, etc.?

Sunscreen if important.

You may wish to bring bug spray just in case. I have never had to use it in all my time there-- bugs are generally not a problem, like many think would be the case in the tropics (but, you may want to apply some mosquito repellent in more malaria endemic regions (like Lake Baringo); but, do what you feel comfortable doing.

*What clothes to bring, should we travel light or pack with a new shirt for every day or somewhere in between?

I suggest you travel light. Laundry services are provided in all hotels and lodges.

I like casual wear with a pocket (or two) that zips (or “velcros”) shut. You will want to carry your passport with you at all times, as well as cash (and room keys), and you want to make sure these are secure at all times. I like the “two-in-one” safari pants with leggings that can be unzipped and removed. That way I have long pants and short pants without actually having to pack both (saves space). For each guest, we request you bring one large suitcase and one travel (“duffle”) bag. This will allow for adequate storage in the safari vehicle for all our guests.

You will be travelling to many places that are generally warm or quite warm; however, evenings in many places can get rather chilly, so pack hoodie pullover (or fleece) and a lined jacket.

Some roads can get dusty, and we may be following other vehicles in the parks. Face masks come in handy during these times, not just for cases of illness (though it is always good to be prepared for the unexpected, as we all have learned with covid)!

One last point of emphasis: Kenya has taken on the scourge of plastics; therefore, plastic bags are not allowed. You can be fined at the point of entrance if you have items stowed in plastic bags. This does not include zippered bags for stowing dental-related items, medication or the like. This has made a tremendous difference in the beautification of Kenya's already amazing landscapes!